

Digital Rights Policy-Making

Citizens' digital rights must be placed at the centre of cities' digital policies and protected through the implementation of technological sovereignty and digital democracy policies.

Citizens' digital rights include the rights of privacy, security, information self-determination and neutrality, giving citizens a choice about what happens to their digital identity, who uses their data online, and for which purposes. Digital democracy enables more citizen participation in design and governance of cities and city services.

With increasing reliance on the internet comes the need to protect and respect basic human rights for all in the digital realm. Globally, six out of ten people are not connected to the internet, and violation of human rights including shutdowns, targeting of activists and journalists for their online activities, collection of personal data without consent, and digital surveillance persist.

A key aspect for preserving citizens' digital rights is technological sovereignty that helps cities protect citizens' rights through greater accessibility, transparency and accountability required for open government.

Technological sovereignty for cities means full control and autonomy of their Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs), including service infrastructures, websites, applications and data, in compliance with and with the support of laws that protect the interests of municipalities and their citizens.

In order to protect human rights principles **such as privacy, freedom of expression, and democracy and incorporate them by design in the digital technologies that people use**, the [Cities Coalition for Digital Rights](#) was born.

The coalition, formed by Amsterdam, Barcelona and New York in November 2018 and now supported by UN-Habitat, UN Office of Human Rights, UCLG and Eurocities, aims to protect and uphold human rights on the internet at the local and global level.

The Coalition aims to share best practices, learn from each other's challenges and successes, and coordinate common initiatives and actions. Inspired by the Internet Rights and Principles Coalition (IRPC), the work of 300 international stakeholders over the past ten years, the

Cities Coalition for Digital Rights are committed to the following five evolving principles:

1. Universal and equal access to the internet, and digital literacy

Everyone should have access to affordable and accessible internet and digital services on equal terms, as well as the digital skills to make use of this access and overcome the digital divide.

2. Privacy, data protection and security

Everyone should have privacy and control over their personal information through data protection in both physical and virtual places, to ensure digital confidentiality, security, dignity and anonymity, and sovereignty over their data, including the right to know what happens to their data, who uses it and for what purposes.

3. Transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination of data, content and algorithms

Everyone should have access to understandable and accurate information about the technological, algorithmic and artificial intelligence systems that impact their lives, and the ability to question and change unfair, biased or discriminatory systems.

4. Participatory Democracy, diversity and inclusion

Everyone should have full representation on the internet, and the ability collectively to engage with the city through open, participatory and transparent digital processes. Everyone should have the opportunities to participate in shaping local digital infrastructures and services and, more generally, city policy-making for the common good.

5. Open and ethical digital service standards

Everyone should be able to use the technologies of their choice, and expect the same level of interoperability, inclusion and opportunity in their digital services. Cities should define their own technological infrastructures, services and agenda, through open and ethical digital service standards and data to ensure that they live up to this promise.

Join the Cities Coalition for Digital Rights here:

<https://citiesfordigitalrights.org>